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RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5264
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0470
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RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4025
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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT URIBE MEETS WITH CODEL REYES

11. On July 8, at 1730, at CATAM airfield in Bogota.

12. Participants:

United States

Chairman Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)
CDA Milton Drucker
C/ORA David Fitzgerald
Michael Delaney
George Pappas
Notetaker

Colombia

President Uribe
FM Fernando Araujo
DAS Director Andres Penate

SUMMARY

13. President Uribe told CODEL Reyes he was frustrated by the U.S. Congress' decision to delay consideration of the U.S.-Colombia bilateral Free Trade Agreement (CTPA). Congressman Reyes noted a significant improvement in Colombia's security situation, and committed to work to gain passage of the CTPA. END SUMMARY.

14. President Uribe told CODEL Reyes he was frustrated by the U.S. Congress' decision to not support the bilateral CTPA at this time. He said the 29 June announcement from the U.S. Congress implied Uribe was being dishonest about the situation in Colombia. He feared that if the agreement was not approved by the U.S. Congress by December, it would not be signed during a U.S. presidential election year. Uribe said the CTPA was a major policy initiative, and its blockage would widely be seen as a significant political failure. He said that at least one member of the extreme left, Senator Gustavo Petro from the Polo Democratico party, claimed credit for the supposed demise of the agreement in the U.S. Congress.

15. Uribe asked the U.S. Congress to consider how politically difficult it was to jail senior ex-paramilitary members. He said his government had taken significant steps to protect labor leaders, and was working to improve general access to justice by adding 104 investigators to the national prosecutor's office.

¶6. Uribe said his government was looking for more effective ways to eliminate coca, by increasing manual eradication, and by shifting the patterns of aerial eradication to make it less predictable.

¶7. Congressman Reyes said that there were significant improvements in the security situation since his 2002 visit. He committed to work to gain passage of the CTPA. Reyes said that although Uribe's recent visit with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus was positive, the U.S. Congress misunderstood the situation in Colombia, in part due to negative publicity. Uribe said he would continue working to improve this perception, would meet with all members of Congress who visit Colombia, and would send regular updates to U.S. Congress members about the improving human and labor rights situation.

CODEL Reyes did not review this message.
Drucker